

CUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
FINAL SCRIPT

Narration: The National Medal for Museum and Library Services is the nation's highest honor for libraries and museums that are serving their communities in exceptional ways. Cumberland County Public Library director Jody Risacher (sounds like Ris – a – sher) and community member Willie Wright traveled to Washington from Fayetteville, North Carolina to receive the national medal and spoke to IMLS about how the library impacts the community.

Jody Risacher: Well, Cumberland County is about 324,000 strong. It is a diverse community, as you would expect. There's a strong military contingent within the community. And because of the presence of military that has added to the diversity of the community.

Willie Wright: Fort Bragg, North Carolina, is currently the largest military installation in the world in terms of personnel. There are about 58,000 to 65,000 soldiers affiliated with that installation, and many of the families they live in the community. And so as the results of living in the community, they use the Cumberland County library system.

Willie Wright: military personnel move frequently, and they need information about the places that they are going to be going to, and once they arrive they can use the libraries to assist them. I think the thing, though, that helps many of our military personnel is the fact that our system assists individuals with career development, and so we have opportunities for them to come in, help them with resumes, provide computers if they need computers, and then we actually have job fairs where agencies will come in and set-up in the library, and individuals can come in and be interviewed.

Jody Risacher: But as the wars are winding down and more soldiers are coming back there are other needs that are emerging, and we are now gathering resources and studying and determining how best public libraries can assist those soldiers who come back as wounded warriors in whatever way, in emotional ways or physical ways, help assist them and their families.

Jody Risacher: In the last few years with the economic downturn, our public library, certainly all public libraries discovered a real need to participate in workforce development in the community. And we found that there were a lot of people who have lost their jobs or are trying to retrain. They're seeing the need to develop better skills, usually in the area of technology. We offer small classes that are very low-key for people who are trying to gain these skills and offer one-on-one assistance.

There are about 30 percent of the population is under 18, and that translates to the public libraries a need for a strong children's programming component.

Jody Risacher: You may have heard of the STEM Initiative, and that's science, technology, engineering and math. There's a great need to encourage young people to

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pursue careers in those areas, and you need to start young. And last spring there was a North Carolina Science Festival, and our library participated and had over 1,000 children participate in a series of programs that included robotics and ooey-gooey science experiments, those kinds of things that are fun and also excite children and make them want to look a little further into that area.

So we're an integral part of the community. We're an anchor institution, and we're there to help people grow in whatever way that they decide they want to grow.